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ABSTRACT

Some generalizations drawn from the literature on futurism are set forth in this monograph. Possible social and behavioral consequences of these as they relate to the work of the counselor are projected. The document then suggests some ways counselors can help clients to create rewarding personal futures, and describes a futures studies program for counselors, outlining what its emphases and outcomes should be. The conclusion raises three questions which the authors state must be answered clearly by all counselors if the profession is to survive in the future: (1) What is the primary mission of counselors?; (2) What is excellence?; and (3) How can counselors insure self-renewal? A short bibliography is included. (Author)

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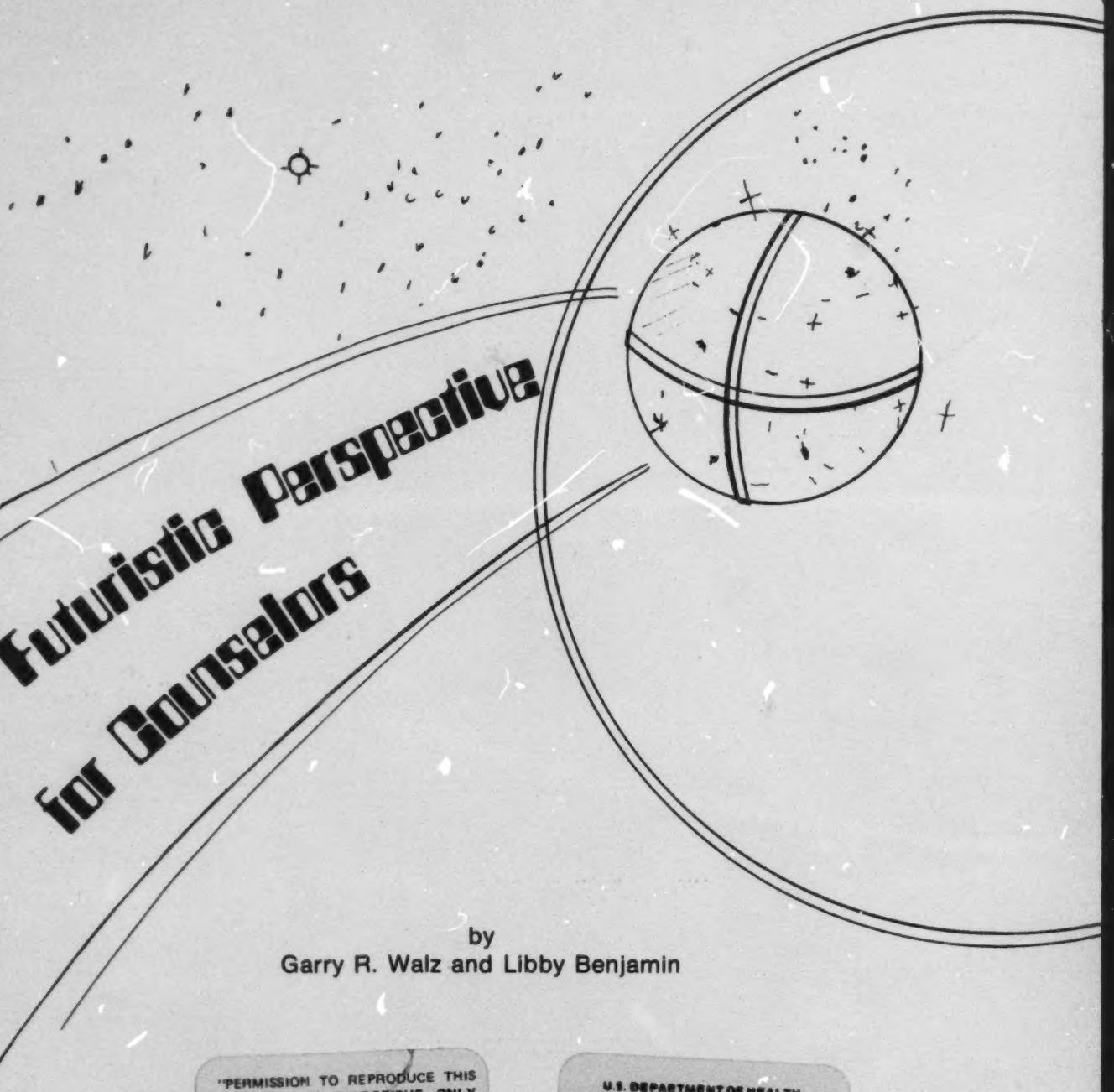

A Futuristic Perspective for Counselors

by
Garry R. Walz and Libby Benjamin

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Garry R. Walz, Professor of Education and Director of the ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse at The University of Michigan, and Libby Benjamin, Associate Director of ERIC/CAPS, have worked together since the beginning of 1974. Their overriding mission is to help counselors enhance their effectiveness, to which end they have developed a number of competency-based training modules for staff development and conducted national and regional workshops on change agentry and futurism. As the major authors of the Life Career Development System, a comprehensive program for implementing career development, they also seek to have impact on the persons with whom counselors work. The CAPS Clearinghouse has a reputation for future-oriented workshops, publications, and activities, and tries always to be on the forefront of counselor need and interest.

Garry is a past president of ACES and APGA; Libby was formerly treasurer of Western ACES and is past president of the Alaska Personnel and Guidance Association.

ABOUT THIS MONOGRAPH

In this paper the authors present some provocative generalizations drawn from the literature on futurism, and project possible social and behavioral consequences of these as they relate to the work of the counselor. They then suggest some ways counselors can help clients to create positive, rewarding personal futures. They describe a futures studies program for counselors, outlining what its emphases and outcomes should be. And they conclude by raising three questions which they feel must be answered clearly by all counselors if the profession is to survive in the future.

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A FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVE FOR COUNSELORS

Garry R. Walz and Libby Benjamin

Introduction

Counselors like to discuss the future as much as people in general like to talk about the weather. If you were observing a group of counselors engaged in some imaging of their future roles and functions, you would undoubtedly hear remarks like the following:

"Counselors aren't going to change in the future. In 40 years I haven't seen much change in who they are or what they do."

"Counselors in the future are really going to be different. Public dissatisfaction with the way they now operate will surely lead to major changes in the roles they assume and the tasks they perform."

"Any future changes in what counselors do will probably consist of refinements or modifications rather than significant or major alterations."

One of the attractions of such discussions is that there are no sure answers. In a real sense, the future is as unknowable as the weather--while one can speculate, or suggest parameters and probabilities, knowing definitely what the future will bring is impossible. One major reason for our lack of assurance is that we are talking about a variety of possible and probable futures, with emphasis on the plural. Just because we are uncertain about what may come in the future, however, does not preclude our discussing and attempting to analyze it. We can come to know the future better by generating rich and varied pictures of several kinds of futures,

developing an array of possible future images, and then considering the probabilities of their realization.

In an age influenced by change it hardly seems necessary to emphasize the importance of being able to cope with change and of considering ways change may affect our profession and ourselves as individual counselors. While many educators base their work on a study of the past, counselors base theirs on helping individuals to make choices relating to the future. In many ways, therefore, the stock and trade of counselors is the future; and by very definition, counselors are futurists, because they deal with plans and decisions about events that are yet to occur. One would expect, then, that counselors, both by inclination and behavior, would be a futuristically-oriented group--but are they?

In the search of several national data bases conducted for this paper we found that the majority of articles relating to futurism were written by people from backgrounds other than counseling. Not many of the articles dealt specifically with counseling futures; and the few that did merely drew together ideas and materials which had been presented elsewhere and attempted to relate their importance to counseling. We are suggesting, therefore, that while dealing with the future is the focus of the <u>work</u> of counselors, the <u>orientation and thinking patterns</u> of counselors are not really futuristically-oriented. One reason may be that the press of current problems and concerns causes them to concentrate their efforts on matters immediate and demanding rather than on those with

far-reaching impact. Our major goal in this paper is to present a meaningful rationale for incorporating futures studies into all counselor education and counselor practice on the premise that futurism involves both an overall orientation and a body of day-to-day practices that should be part of the training of all counselors.

We would like to present first some generalizations drawn from the literature on futurism designed to stimulate thinking and interaction about various aspects of the future. Second, we will project possible social and behavioral consequences of these broad impending developments as they relate to the work of counselors. Third, we will suggest some roles counselors can play in helping individuals to counteract some of the possible negative behavioral projections and create a positive and rewarding future. Our fourth emphasis will be given to describing a futures studies program, including a statement of what should be its emphases and outcomes. And we will conclude by addressing three compelling questions to the counseling profession--questions that we believe the profession must be prepared to answer if it is to survive in the future.

Futuristic Stimulus Generalizations

On the following pages we present a number of generalizations drawn from the literature on futurism that are intended to provide provocative, stimulating, conflicting, and challenging views of the future. They encourage assertive expression and open-ended interaction about the future

in some of its many dimensions. Let these generalizations be a starter to our own discussion.

1. There is "a compulsive American tendency to avoid confrontation of chronic social problems" (Slater, p. 12). This desire to avoid dealing directly with key social problems and to remain uninvolved is observable in the short-term, hardware type solutions applied to human issues, which seem to be designed to submerge them and wash them away. Federal funding of innovative educational projects is one illustration of this: Once a project is completed and the report is written, the issue at hand is considered closed, and new practices are not supported on a far-reaching, long-term basis.

2. The nature of middle-American culture is destructive to the desire to live with a feeling of community, trust, and brotherhood with one's fellows. While living collectively is characteristic of many cultures, Americans place considerable emphasis on individuality and competition, and our technology is making it increasingly easy for people to live in isolation from others.

3. Contrary to the traditional middle-class, white-American view that we are not a violent people, we are. While our desired image is one of a humanitarian culture, our behavior (from the appalling and rising evidence of crime to our hunger for vicarious mayhem through the media) does not support this view.

4. Most present-day Americans are probably not constitutionally suited to accommodate rapid change and mobility and are liable to suffer from "future shock." Toffler (1970, p. 289-326) describes the symptoms of this disease (which results from too much stimulation and freedom rather than too little) as anxiety, depression, physiological complaints, denial of selected aspects of reality, confusion, frustration, and violence. The end product, he suggests, is apathy and psychological withdrawal from society.

5. A highly mobile society fosters rapid making and breaking of of relationships with a resultant loss of commitment--to people, to things, to places, to values.

6. Society tends to be reactive rather than proactive in its approach to problems. It is now possible for us to choose the kind of future we wish to create; yet we are unable (perhaps because there are so many choices) to choose goals for ourselves or for a future society.

7. Our present school system--structured, regimented, with rigid systems for grading, seating, and graduating--was once effective for students who later entered a similar kind of world. That system today must change if students are to be prepared to cope with this present world of rapid and continual change.

8. The generation gap is real. Time is becoming more important than space as a reason for differences among people. Whereas technology has, in effect, conquered space, the blinding rush of change is making a great difference in the life experiences of individuals.

9. The trend is intensifying toward separation of society into special interest groups (young-old, female-male, poor-affluent, producer-consumer, radical-conservative) which will cause an increase in confrontation and conflict. Thus, there will be more need for negotiation and compromise in the future.

10. Dramatic changes are underway in attitudes toward work and money. "Money will be...much less of a motivation...will become more 'means' instead of an 'end' or goal in itself. There will be a growing demand that one's job be meaningful. The notion that hard or unpleasant work must be tolerated because it is unavoidable will have less and less acceptance. The concept that work is a *duty* and leisure must be *earned* will be more and more challenged" (General Electric Study of the Future, 1970).

11. The role of education in the future will become less a matter of transmission of knowledge and more a process of developing the thought processes, values, and skills that prepare individuals to adapt to and initiate change. Versatility, flexibility, and problem-solving ability will increasingly become core educational goals.

12. A very significant trend might be called the antispecialization or interdisciplinary trend. The boundaries between the social sciences will become more and more blurred by teamwork in research and scholarship. Schools of applied behavioral science will also begin to integrate such professional schools as education, social work, public health, clinical psychology, public administration, natural resources, and ecology. More and more creative designs for delivery of professional services will be generated by heterogeneous teams from clinical practice, education, religion, social welfare, and public and mental health.

13. With the dramatic increase in consumer demand for personal helping services, the gap between need for services and available trained professionals to provide them will widen.

14. The young are learning to support each other; they are mobilizing strength and sophistication in their interactions with the older generation. A rapidly growing trend is toward an increase in power and responsibility of the young in regard to setting goals, making plans, and designing the programs for education, work, and leisure time in which they are involved. The future will see a rapid increase in the election and appointment of youth to agency boards; school boards; community, state, and national planning committees; and boards of trustees of colleges, churches, and other institutions. Confrontations by youth to test and develop their base of influence will increase.

15. Counselors are typically prepared to work in stable and organized environments, but future organizational designs will increasingly emphasize

temporariness, spontaneity, and problem-solving versus role-centered orientations.

16. Technology, removal of the aged from the home, mobility, and the isolation of the suburban home have contributed to the decline of rewards and the recognition once awarded the housewife. Women will increasingly seek alternatives other than the traditional housewife role.

17. Reaction against "mass society" will increase. There will be less and less tolerance for depersonalization, for being an "IBM card," more resistance to pressures toward conformity. The increase in general level of education will result in more personal self-respect and more rejection of authoritarianism and social restraints.

18. Conflict exists between the manpower needs of society and its built-in status rewards. We have taught our young to value the liberal arts college education, but all projections into the future job market indicate an increasing need for trained technologists. In the future, society may restructure its status and reward system to give feelings of worth and dignity to specialists as well as generalists.

Counselor-Relevant Images of the Future

We have sketched in broad terms some possible and probable changes that may occur in the short- and long-term future for society as a whole. The reader will note that some of the trends appear to be conflicting, and we can envision heated discussions over a few of the projections based upon individual orientation and attitude. Another way to view the future is to project possible <u>consequences</u> of impending developments, particularly as they impact on counselors--to image what will occur

socially and behaviorally as a result of some of the more predictable and probable changes.

Ask people to describe their concept of the future. You will find that most will couch the reply in technological terms--new fantastic modes of transportation; all-knowing computers that manage our lives; scientific gadgets that make labor a thing of the past; physical structures whose surrealistic forms and proportions boggle the mind. Technology is seen by many as the ruler of what is to come, the determiner of what will be.

While consideration of the impact of technology on our future is appropriate, of greater importance perhaps is developing conceptions concerning our behavioral future. Behavioral options clearly will accompany each new technological development, and we should consider what social inventions are likely to have import for us. Individuals should be helped to view the future not as an era of impersonal technology, divorced from themselves and over which they have no control, but rather as an environment that will call for new behavioral skills about which they can make choices. Viewing the future in this manner helps individuals to conceptualize the future in meaningful terms and causes it to become more personal and realizable.

This section presents some images of the behavioral and social consequences of change that have particular meaning for counselors. These images may serve as beacons of future developments and as priorities which may be instrumental in shaping future counselor roles and functions.

1. Individuals will place an emphasis on role before goal.

The middle-term future may very well find individuals giving prime priority to finding themselves as human beings, seeking to clarify their own personal identity before identifying their goals or professional identity. The present self-help literature movement will likely increase, and people will be seeking for ways to respond more fully to their potentials as individuals. This development may even take a hedonistic, egotistic direction with individuals seeking their own personal aggrandizement at the expense of attention to or caring for others. "Doing your own thing" may assume more strength than the present trend indicates. People will be less accepting of attaching personal status and worth to what they do, of defining who they are in terms of their work. To the question "What are you going to be?" young people will answer, "I already am."

Opportunities for lifelong learning and continuing growth and development will flourish and will involve major portions of the population. Older people, and those who have retired in their early fifties, will be seeking meaningful non-work-oriented outlets for their talents and interests. "Stopping out," leaving a major goal-directed activity such as pursuing a degree or working at a job, and entering a new area of activity such as travel, self-study, or meditation, will increasingly become an option for many people. Counselors will meet clients looking for assistance in charting a life course that will enable them to experience more of life and

develop their unexpressed potentials as persons.

2. Hostility, polarization, and aggression will become more commonplace.

Sociologists foresee increasing affluence and the capacity to produce material goods as negatively related to feelings of brotherhood. As people become more oriented toward personal acquisitions and wealth, they will draw unto themselves, separate themselves from their fellow human beings, focus their attention on "me and mine." Counselors will meet individuals who prioritize behaviors which enhance personal satisfaction and survival over behaviors which contribute to the common good.

3. Knowledge will become the most eagerly sought-after resource of the future.

The capacity of an individual to acquire and use knowledge appropriately may well be the primary determinant in his/her personal and professional effectiveness. While interpersonal communication will continue to be important, the future will place increasing emphasis on people's ability to retrieve and use information specific to their needs and goals from a variety of data bases, including impersonal computer information banks. Counselors will work with clients who want to learn how to utilize numbers of information sources to make futuristic plans and decisions.

4. The transitional dynamics in personal and social change will increase in importance.

Up to now in many of our activities as helping professionals we

have focused on the importance of the decision-making process and the character and substance of desired change. The midterm future will see an increasing emphasis on the process of change. Individuals go through a predictable series of cycles as they move from one situation or state to another, including a fairly well-known set of affective feelings and cognitive tasks. Each transition requires that an individual give up something in order to be able to move on to something else. Learning the process of making changes will become a major focus of the counselor's interventions in the future. We will move to the point of saying that not only is the decision important, we also must be concerned with how we plan to make desired changes.

5. Attitudes and values in relation to work will change.

The midterm future will bring an increasingly jobless society. It has been forecasted that in about 20 years 15% of the population will be able to provide all of the necessary goods and services for the total population. This suggests that our increasingly automated and mechanized society will require less person-hours to provide the basic necessities of life. Thus, to work at a job for a major share of one's life may no longer be a realistic expectation for the future. While we have no way of estimating how many people will be involved in jobs as we now know them, it seems fair to say that absorbing all those who would like either part- or full-time employment will be an impossibility. The social consequences of this are, of course, enormous. In the current ethos, an individual's personal

worth is closely associated with his/her involvement in an occupational enterprise. With jobs becoming more scarce and smaller numbers of people involved in gainful employment in the society of the future, individuals must find ways to realize a sense of personal worth other than through their occupations.

Counselors will be seeing clients who want to design individual growth plans that contain provisions for lifelong learning and lifelong involvements and contributions. Jobs may be a part of these growth plans but will have less permanence and longevity. People will move in and out of the labor force, and the relationship between work and education will blur. As patterns change in both education and employment, more people going to school will be involved in concurrent occupational experience; in like manner, jobs will increasingly provide opportunities for individuals to continue their schooling.

6. Depersonalization will be the common response to viewing the future.

The advent of books like Future Shock (Toffler, 1970) and movies about encounters of a third kind have made futurism an "in" topic. Discussing the future and sharing ideas as to what life will be like in the twenty-first century is heady stuff--ideal for conversation on the cocktail circuit. This popularization and the media blitz associated with it have, generally, been of little benefit to individuals. They think of the future as something far distant and abstract, a fanciful exercise, something with entertainment value--but not a phenomenon that will influence their behavior or

give them cause for personal reflection, not something they should think seriously about and get ready for.

It is very human to believe that impending problems, even catastrophies, happen to somebody else, that they will somehow bypass me, the individual. Watching or reading about calamities from the "outside"--like watching a murder show on television or reading newspaper accounts of the destruction lying in the wake of a tornado--is fascinating, but beyond the realm of the personal for most of us. Viewers can become victims, however, unless they can give personal meaning to the implications of the forces which are developing around and enveloping them. Counselors, perhaps more than most, can help people to see relationships between external events and the need to develop appropriate personal behaviors to cope with those events.

7. Future images act to control present behaviors.

Particularly hurtful to developing a futuristic orientation is the view that futuristic thinking and planning can be fun and interesting but of little real utility. "It lacks practicality," says the pragmatist. "Why deal with the future when I can't even manage the present?" says the realist. To many, concern for the future may be utopian and idealistic.

On the contrary, we suggest that one's view of the future can have a direct effect on how one behaves in the present. If individuals see themselves as people who will experience multiple careers in a lifetime, who will need to form and adapt to multiple, rapidly-changing relationships,

who may be facing retirement at age 45, then it is likely that they will behave differently in the present. Our images of tomorrow can have profound effect on how we behave today. A futuristic orientation can also help us to avoid focusing on immediate gratifications in favor of long-term, more lasting rewards. If life is to be other than a fever chart of ups and downs, it is crucial that we develop futuristic concepts that will be useful in dealing with both immediate concerns and long-term goals.

Future-Relevant Counseling Behaviors

A major goal of many counseling strategies is helping clients to acquire cognitive and behavioral skills that will enable them to deal successfully with a wide variety of potential problems and tasks. Frequently, both the nature and the magnitude of the tasks are unknown and the focus is on the development of broadly applicable methods of problem-solving and behavioral control. While teaching general coping skills may be very important, assisting people to project potential problem areas is equally desirable. It is predictable that many of today's adolescents will experience considerable difficulty as adults in areas such as marital relationships, other kinds of personal relationships, career change, mobility, and problems related to aging and retirement. It seems highly desirable, therefore, that they be prepared to manage such problems and that they develop a repertoire of problem-specific skills. Being forewarned allows the lead time necessary to build and temper the skills needed to deal with

future areas of concern.

In the next pages we suggest some roles counselors can play in helping individuals to create a future that is positive both for the person and for society. We say "to create" because just "to cope" is not enough. Coping implies adapting to, adjusting to, responding to. Creating, on the other hand, means being prepared for, being on top of, being forearmed. Envisioning a desired future and then causing it to become a reality requires a much higher-level body of skills. We believe that counselors can be a significant force in helping people to become architects, if you will, of a future of their own design.

Facilitator of Caring and Sharing

At the top of our hierarchy of needs is the need for self-actualization which, in its deepest sense, implies a fulfillment or transcendence of self--an inner humility and peace that allows individuals to forget selfish concerns and personal desires. The most admired and respected national figures are those who convey a sense of caring about others and who see beyond their own personal needs. Clearly, the universal regard which greeted Pope John I's behavior during the few days of his life as Pope was a reflection of people's great outgrowth of feeling and love for a man who communicated such humility and caring for others.

Counselors can play an important role in helping people to realize the importance of caring and sharing as basic ingredients of a richly

satisfying existence. Both in their counseling and their work as consultants in curriculum development, counselors can help individuals enhance their own sense of worth by developing a commitment to caring for others and assisting others to grow and develop. They can act as models in designing experiences that help people express their caring for and encourage their sharing with one another, and that promote interdependence and desire for the common good as worthy and necessary goals.

Facilitator of Life Transitions

Increased mobility, making and breaking numerous relationships, and engaging in a number of careers will create trauma and discomfort for many people. In the future there will be fewer expectations for an individual to persist in a given activity, whether it be education or employment, for an indeterminate period of time, and more contracting with educational institutions and employers to achieve specific goals or tasks within a projected time frame. Counselors increasingly will be called upon to serve as switching points to assist individuals to move in and out of different life roles and activities, and to acquire the skills necessary to accomplish such transitions with tranquility.

Broker of Vital Information

Clients and other individuals will increasingly look toward the counselor as a resource linker. Counselors will be sought out to help people locate the sources of information and data they require for their

particular needs and interests. They will play a vital role in helping people to design strategies for searching national data bases to obtain information on vital questions or issues of concern. Much time will also be devoted to helping individuals interpret the information they receive and use it in a systematic decision-making process.

Facilitator of Change

Someone has said that the rate of change can be likened to that of transportation. We are presently in the age of the Concorde. If this assumption is true, then flying at a p faster than sound means that we are experiencing change faster than we can hear or acknowledge it. The forces engendered by such rapid change can be bewildering and unsettling. Counselors can be of great help in assisting people to acquire the skills of effective change agents, to be authors of change rather than passive or frantic responders to it. Specifically, they can help their clients to develop criteria for identifying when a change is needed, to learn a process for making the change happen, and to develop guidelines for determining whether the change is a successful and adequate response to their particular needs and wants.

Futures Studies Program

The future will likely be a time of turbulence. Conflicting social emphases and priorities, occurring with great rapidity, will pose

moral and ethical dilemmas. Counselors will be called upon to meet the needs of many different constituencies. If counselors are left to respond to these and deal with them on a crisis basis, using whatever resources they have at hand, the task is likely to prove unrewarding, to cause distress and anxiety rather than feelings of pleasure and achievement. Counselors will experience again the all-too-familiar pattern of waiting for social developments to reach the flash point before they are able to devise an appropriate and widespread response.

Clearly, a futures studies program could be of inestimable assistance to counselor educators, state supervisors, and guidance directors in helping them decide where priorities should be, not only for preservice but for postservice and inservice training as well. Additionally, the very activity of deciding what might be the major demands and priorities of the short- or near-term future could help to bring about consensus regarding counselor roles and functions which would serve the best interests of the profession.

Special Emphases

We should state first that the purpose of a futures studies program is not to develop accurate predictions of what the future will be. The goal, rather, should be to understand better what is possible and to delineate within broad parameters what will or may occur, with what probabilities, within a given time frame.

A second major emphasis should be placed in identifying from among

all possible events those that have the most probability of occurring. Different "sets" of assumptions will determine the probabilities. The key here is to begin the process of narrowing views of the future.

The third emphasis should be on moving from the probable to the preferred. Of those things which are both possible and probable, which deserve special attention? By knowing clearly what is most preferred, we may be able to revise probabilities and actually create the kind of future that we most desire.

Generating futuristic images that relate to possible, probable, and preferred outcomes will provide a collective action that works not only for greater personal counselor effectiveness but also for greater counselor social impact.

Outcomes from a Futures Studies Program

Listed below are some suggestions concerning contributions that an ongoing futures studies program could make to counselor education and counseling practices. They are only illustrative. Hopefully, they will stimulate further thought about other potential outcomes such a program might produce.

1. Develop a broad array of innovative options. We are frequently encapsulated by our options; our view of the options open to us is limited by our immediate environment and our own personal experiences. Thus, it is not unusual for people to limit their employment options to those

currently engaged in by people within their families or communities. If our view of what is possible is limited, then so will be our behavior.

Futures studies can help individuals and groups to develop a broad array of innovative options--innovative in the sense that, while they may have existed previously, they were unknown to the people involved--or, to invent brand new options--totally different in form and the result of creative activity by the individuals or groups. Just viewing an array of options can give individuals a different perspective regarding the future. Limited knowledge of options may cause people to give little thought to legitimate decision-making, while learning about a large number of alternatives can make them dramatically aware of the need to make wise choices, as well as to consider how those choices will influence their future activities and behavior. Increasing individuals' perception of choices and options through such a program will greatly expand their ability to create a rewarding future.

2. Consider the consequences of future actions. While it may be an oversimplification to say that people can be divided into two groups, we suggest that some people let things happen, and others make things happen. The individuals who make things happen are knowledgeable about and influenced by consideration of the consequences of various actions or behaviors. In a futures studies program people can explore and discuss consequences as a way of helping them choose preferred options and thus prepare themselves better for the future.

3. Develop a longer time frame. Recently a think-tank participant described his experience with a group of eminent philosophers and behavioral scientists who had been brought together to discuss the future. The objective was for individuals to concentrate on the distant future and begin to develop some images of what life would be like in 25 to 50 years. The experience proved difficult to manage as the participants, rather consistently, kept moving from a futures time perspective to the more immediate present. In fact, some of the participants lost interest in focusing on the future because of their concern about what was happening now. So it is, often, with counselors and other educators who have to deal with problems of such immediate urgency that long-term concerns and planning must be "put on hold."

Developing a longer time frame, thinking beyond the immediate press to future issues and concerns, has several advantages:

(a) It provides opportunity to "gear up." Forewarned is forearmed. If we know where the dragons are, we can more effectively develop the sword that will slay them.

(b) It helps us to gain a more balanced perspective. Viewing our difficulties from an historical perspective can keep us from becoming too easily ruffled by current presses, give us the feeling that they are not as unsolvable as they appear to be, and help us to realize that others have dealt with crises and problems of similar magnitude and have been successful in overcoming them.

(c) It helps us to assess the appropriateness and utility of what we are doing. A futuristic perception provides a frame of reference for decision-making and goal-setting developed from thoughtful images of what will occur in the future. Ideas about what may be ahead probably provide a more useful basis for dealing with the "now" than do ideas about what has already happened.

4. Envisage new goals. A major purpose of a futures studies program is assisting people to envisage new goals and the means for achieving those goals. Understandably, an orientation toward the present and toward present and past priorities will engender development of a set of goals very different from those that grow out of futuristic images. Frequently, futuristic images serve to mobilize the system to develop innovative goals and give rise to a sense of optimism and excitement. The futures studies program can assist people to develop new goals representing a range of desired outcomes that can give direction and purpose to their day-to-day activities. Individuals can thus see more clearly the relationship between what they are presently doing and some valued long-term outcomes.

5. Perform an early warning function. One can recount vivid examples in counseling history of counselors having demands thrust upon them for which they had little or no preparation--demands that seemed to materialize almost magically, with no prior warning. Student activism, changing and cyclical enrollments at various age levels, the drug culture, affirmative action, and even career development are only a few illustrations of some

recent events that burst upon the educational scene--and for which counselors were asked to provide effective leadership and responses. In fact, most of these events and developments were predictable.

It is fair to suggest that, in many instances, the reaction of counselors was other than exemplary. The outcomes would no doubt have been very different if advance indications of changing patterns had been noted. An early warning of some of the most recent happenings with implications for counselors, for example, could have led to development of special counselor renewal workshops designed to prepare counselors with both the knowledge and the skills for dealing with these social changes. Training programs could also have been developed under specially-funded programs so that when great numbers of counselors asked for assistance, resources would have been available to them.

Advance warning and preparation would not only have made counselors more dynamic and skillful in dealing with new areas of behavior, but would also have brought plaudits to the profession for its ability to anticipate societal needs. At the minimum, a futures studies program could have helped to bring to light and dramatize current social trends. Counselors could then have had the lead time necessary to develop a variety of potential strategies and responses for dealing with them.

Futuristic Challenges for the Counseling Profession

A look to the future makes it clear that counseling as an organized

profession will face many new, yet-unknown challenges and demands. In fact, the future will undoubtedly bring a variety of challenges to all of our existing services and traditions. Only those professions which have given serious thought to alternative futures are likely to survive. It is in the spirit of encouraging our profession to think futuristically, to deal with what is important rather than just what is urgent, that we pose the following three major questions. We feel that these are questions we must be prepared to answer either explicitly or implicitly. By addressing them now, we will be in a better position to respond to them in the future.

1. What is our primary mission as counselors?

A frequently quoted comment is that railroads lost their preeminence in the American scene because they thought their mission was to perpetuate railroads. What they failed to understand was that they were not in the railroading business, they were in the transportation business. If they had viewed their primary mission as transportation, they probably would have developed far differently and would today still be a viable force in American business and commerce.

How we address ourselves to basic, fundamental questions frequently determines what our future will be. Ask a group of counselors what their primary mission is and you may very well receive as many answers as there are counselors. Diversity in esoteric responses is tolerated, even appreciated, within our profession. However, the common thread running

through all of the answers would likely be that the primary mission of counselors is to counsel. No matter what the time--present or future--or the occasion--personal or occupational--the counselor's sine qua non is the ability to provide counseling. This answer would not be flippant or superficial. A preponderance of guidance literature deals with the counseling process, and counselor preparation programs give major emphasis to provision of both didactic and supervised work in counseling. Indeed, many counselors take solace, even pleasure, in the fact that there is apparent consensus as to what is and will be their primary mission. They see the emphasis on counseling as the result of a hard-fought battle, and feel that only within the last decade or two has counseling really received true appreciation and support.

Certainly there is much to support this view. But fundamentally such a perspective suggests that the identity of counselors is determined by the tools they use, by the methods they employ to provide services to others. In the starkest terms such an attitude short-changes the counselor. It defines the counselor as a person who delivers a service rather than a person who is committed to bringing about a variety of socially desirable outcomes. Few professions limit their practitioners to the means that they can use to bring about desired ends. Physicians are forever seeking new ways to alleviate or abolish disease. Engineers continually push the frontiers of new technological innovations and inventions so as to extend their ability to create. Musicians work to expand the means by which they

to distinguish that which is excellent from that which is only good, and that which is good from that which is poor or unacceptable.

It is unlikely that any human service will win much support in the future unless it can also provide clear criteria by which others may evaluate the quality of specific services. No general criteria exist today that make it easy for practitioners or educators to define unmistakably what constitutes excellence in counseling. Such criteria should speak to outcomes and not process. Tabulating the number of hours of staff training, or clients seen, or money devoted to projects, or time spent with individual clients is descriptive--but in no way does it provide definitive information on the quality of services.

The French have a phrase: "The good is the enemy of the best." We must be very concerned in counseling that we not be satisfied just with the good, that the phrase, "It's pretty good," not represent an adequate level of performance. Rather, we must be able to delineate clearly the meaning and substance of excellence, not only as a guide for consumers but also as a goal toward which all programs will strive.

3. How can we insure self-renewal?

The changes and the challenges that we have described underwrite the critical need for counselor renewal. No counselors prepared in one time period will be adequately prepared to serve in another unless they have engaged in continuing attempts to renew their skills. Counselors must feel that they have never completed their training, that lifelong

learning and continuing renewal are vital aspects of their professional competence.

How to achieve counselor renewal is a critical question. Basically, it would seem to involve a double commitment: first, a commitment on the part of institutions to provide in ongoing programs the time and resources necessary to assist counselors to acquire new and upgrade existing skills and competencies; and second, a commitment on the part of every individual counselor to take responsibility for his/her self-renewal. No program or plan, however well conceived and managed, will succeed unless the individuals themselves are devoted to personal and professional growth. Perhaps the most appropriate guideline for counselors is the concept of being "totally committed but only half sure"--committed to serving their clients and giving totally of themselves to those who need them, but only half sure as to the excellence of what they do, willing always to re-examine and change as they discover better, more effective ways of functioning.

Conclusion

In car racing parlance, a driver is "on the bubble" when he/she has the slowest qualifying time while other drivers are still waiting their turns. If another driver posts a faster speed, then the driver on the bubble is bumped.

We believe that counselors are on the bubble, that they are in the

midst of intense and aggressive competition with other special services and special interest groups who are clamoring for the inside track for money and support. The strident demands, the thrusting forward, the seeking for a way to outdo others blur the distinctions between services and result in what looks like a whirring, deafening, tightly-packed group of antagonists jockeying for position.

Unless counselors can be seen as offering a distinct contribution, their bubble may well burst, and they will be bumped by more aggressive individuals who know what they are about. Counselors possess the potential to help people of all ages move into the future with assurance, to know where to go and how to get there. In the race for survival in helping services, futurism may well be the super-charging element that counselors need to move off the bubble into the pole position.

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